

identified before their interment, and therefore, they were buried as “unknowns.”

In recognition of his service, Seaman Saunders was awarded a Purple Heart for military merit and three ribbons for American Defense, American Campaign, and the Asiatic-Pacific Campaign.

As the last living sibling, Anna Belle was committed to bringing her brother home and laying him to rest at the gravesite that their parents prepared for him those years and years ago at Fairview Cemetery in Winnie, Texas.

□ 1045

In 2015, the DPAA was given authority to exhume the unknown remains of these servicemen associated with the USS *Oklahoma* and to reexamine them. It was at this point that the military contacted Anna Belle, his younger sister. She worked tirelessly to gather and provide DNA of family members to help identify her brother's remains.

Unfortunately, Anna Belle passed away on July 19, 2019, but she never lost hope that her brother would one day return home. She prayed her unwavering mission would be continued by those who survived her, and it was. On February 11, 2021, the Saunders family received word that their long-lost relative had finally been found and identified.

Mr. Speaker, Seaman Second Class Charles “Sonny Boy” Saunders’ arrival in Winnie, Texas, will be welcomed by many relatives, friends, and fellow patriots; finally coming home. On the 80th anniversary of his passing, Mr. Saunders will be buried alongside his parents with full military honors.

May God continue to bless this family for their long record of service and sacrifice to our great Nation.

#### USING EMPLOYER-SPONSORED EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS TO PAY OFF STUDENT DEBT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS) for 5 minutes.

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about a national problem that has continued for years; that is the rise in student loan debt. Over 40 million borrowers hold outstanding student loan balances that exceed \$1.7 trillion. The average borrower holds about \$39,000 in student debt.

This is unacceptable. We hear talk about pie-in-the-sky policies, like debt forgiveness, that come maybe from the other side of this Capitol or Chamber, what we call the U.S. Senate. These are not just pie-in-the-sky proposals; they are BS. They are not going to happen. It is time that Members of this body talk about the solutions that all of us here helped implement. We actually addressed the student debt issue.

It is through legislation I led with my colleague, Congressman SCOTT

PETERS of California, that was signed into law by President Trump last year, that would allow employers to make tax-free student loan payments of up to \$5,250 per year to each employee who holds an eligible student loan, lowering payroll taxes both for employers and the employees.

This public-private partnership model makes student loan payments eligible for employer-sponsored educational assistance programs, just like tuition assistance has been for years.

In fact, my good friends at Chegg—and I have got four public universities in my district, four private universities in my district, and a handful of community colleges in my district—every one of those students, like my three kids who are in college right now and grad school, knows what Chegg is. That is where they are getting their books. It is a cost-effective, private-sector approach to lower the cost of textbooks for kids nationwide.

Well, the people of Chegg know how important student debt is, because they have actually paid back over a million dollars in student debt for their employees. They have actually taken advantage of this program that we all passed in a bipartisan way to address this \$1.7 trillion problem.

Every employer out there should do what Chegg has done and take advantage of the tax provisions that are in place and were put in place by Republicans and Democrats and signed into law by President Trump. Let's make sure that you use this as an effective recruitment tool and retention tool in this economy.

Mr. Speaker, I am asking my colleagues to help get the word out to our employers across this great country to use what is already available to them and their employees who have student debt. They can use this student loan debt benefit to help recruit more workers. They can use it to retain more talent. They can use it to give their employees financial freedom and make a real difference in their lives by reducing their student debt and by reducing the \$1.7 trillion in debt that we have in this country, which outnumbers all auto and credit card debt combined.

Help the employees. Help America. Let's get this economy back on track.

#### WE NEED THE ESSENTIAL CAREGIVERS ACT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from New York (Ms. TENNEY) for 5 minutes.

Ms. TENNEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the colead of H.R. 3733, the Essential Caregivers Act, to tell the stories of Americans across the country who are desperately calling on Congress to immediately act on this bill.

I also thank Representative LARSON, who is my colead, for helping me sponsor this bill. I am grateful to him for his leadership and his compassion.

I have shared many heartbreaking and tragic stories before in this Cham-

ber, and I will continue to do so until there is action on my bipartisan Essential Caregivers Act. Just as so many families who were forced to helplessly watch as their loved ones rapidly declined physically and mentally in long-term care facilities, I am not going to give up this fight. I am just getting started.

First and foremost, the Essential Caregivers Act is a critically important bill that would ensure the policies that were put in place during the COVID-19 pandemic never happen again. In my home State of New York, and many States across the Nation, families were literally shut out from their loved ones living in long-term care facilities, neglecting the basic needs of their loved ones at these facilities. These decisions to isolate long-term care facility residents were fatal and will have long-lasting impacts.

Today, I am here to share stories that go beyond my home State of New York. I will begin by sharing a story from Alaska. This is an excerpt from the book entitled “Protecting Them to Death.” This is a book that was compiled and written by my great constituent, Karla Abraham-Conley, who lost her mother in a long-term care facility.

This is an excerpt from the book compiled using COVID-19 isolation stories. The first one is a story from Denise Brown:

“Ohana” means “family” in Hawaiian and that no one is left behind. This word means a lot to us. My mother's skilled nursing facility was an hour away from her home and ours, so they became her pseudo ohana.

She was moved there by the State of Alaska when an employee brought COVID-19 into her extended care facility. She was able to see us through a window once or twice a week because she was on the ground floor at that time. We talked every day on the phone, except for those days when she was too weak to answer my call. Last year on her birthday, when she was in the final skilled nursing facility that the State had moved her to, we cooked her dinner outside her window, we sent it in to her via a CNA. My boys built her rock towers, and we sang “Happy Birthday” through the window. But the moment they moved my mother to the second floor, I think she gave up hope of getting stronger, of seeing the faces she loved through the window. It was her one connection to us that still seemed real and wasn't through a virtual visit. We lost her on January 12, 2021.

Mr. Speaker, Ms. Brown could still be here with us today if she had had access to an essential caregiver.

The next two stories come to us from Arizona. The first story is from Linda Thompson, also featured in the book “Protecting Them to Death”:

My husband is in a memory care facility. He no longer speaks as a direct result of the isolation during the pandemic. He uses a walker. Because he was confined to his room, he was unable to exercise his legs. All his physical abilities have declined significantly. Change of any kind takes a toll on dementia residents. Knowing that he spent 17 days in a sterile room in the COVID-19 ward of his facility is heartbreaking. He had very few symptoms but lost 20 pounds. I am still praying this never happens again.